Moving Pictures of the Doctor's Compound

Dr. Lucy Bement

By Mrs. Ozora S. Davis

An hour is a very short time—except sometimes, when it is very long! Possibly the reader may remember some day when it seemed an hour would never pass. Some dear one of your family may have been suffering, and

Coming away from the Hospital—a Happy Family.

when you hurriedly called the doctor's office the physician was not at home, so you waited one hour, two hours, three hours perhaps, until he came to relieve the pain. But what if there had been no doctor at all to summon, no relief for the dear mother or the little girl?

Since the secluded women of China are strictly forbidden by custom to be visited by a man, the women of the great district around Shaowu were wholly without medical

aid until the coming of Dr. Lucy Bement. One million women and children without a doctor's knowledge or service! · It was a tremendous need. Seldom in this civilized age teeming with trained workers of every sort, is there so large an empty spot in the world's work, crying out for someone to fill it. Indeed it is hard to realize in crowded America, where numberless unemployed are begging for tasks, where competition is so intense, and the contention for opportunity so fierce, that anyone could be quite so sorely needed as was Dr. Bement.

She was born in Ohio. With her sister, Miss Frances Bement, she attended the public school in the village of West Dover, not so very far from beautiful Lake Erie. Sunday School was held in the little school-house, but sometimes the sisters walked to the church three miles away, and later they became members of the Second Congregational Church of Olmstead. They both entered high school in Elyria in 1887.

Miss Bement's first missionary service was in the home field under the American Missionary Association. For two years she taught at Pine Mountain, Tenn. Then not content with her previous study, she went to Massachusetts where she graduated from the Training School for Nurses in Newburyport in 1893 and four years later she took her diploma from the Medical College in Baltimore. It was a splendid preparation for the work which was before her—a country childhood, teaching experience among the poorer people of the south, and adequate training in nursing and medicine. In 1898 the two sisters went to Shaowu.

The journey was and is still a long one. Even after Foochow was reached there was still the long trip of two hundred and fifty miles up the Min River to the inland station where no unmarried woman had ever lived before. The boat was so large and so heavily loaded, and so many stops were made for the sale of the cargo that twenty-eight days were required for the journey. Finally at Crys-

tal Hill the sisters left the river-boat and walked or rode in sedan chairs until sunset, when they came to the home of Dr. Walker, our American Board Missionary. The following morning, three miles farther, they reached at last the city of Shaowu which was to be their home.

It is in many ways a lovely country. In this province there are long, almost unbroken stretches of hills and mountains. The rivers are rocky and very swift, difficult

Dr. Lucy P. Bement.

and dangerous highways, along which nearly all travelling must be done. Deep ravines add to the difficulty of many journeys. There are climbs through bamboo rivers up, up, two thousand feet, then down, down, on the other side, then along a mountain brook with hardly a path beside it. In some spots there is almost a jungle of palms, ferns, bamboos, and banana trees, while many varieties of beautiful flowers,—lilies, begonias and others—add beauty to the scene. It has been called the "Switzerland of China." Wild beasts too are not lacking. Several tigers were killed within five or six miles of the station during the

last year or two, and Dr. Bement tells in one letter of a cobra killed only a few feet from the house.

In the midst of this wild country in a little house near the East Gate of Shaowu, a building condemned years before as untenantable Dr. Bement and her sister took up their abode.

Work began at once. The dining-room, for lack of a better place was used as doctor's office, and here Dr. Bement began to treat patients whom the native druggist sent to her, spending also as much time as possible every day on the language.

These beginnings were interrupted by the Boxer uprising. Dr. and Miss Bement found refuge in a mountain near Foochow, and when they returned they found not a door or window of their home was left, the floors and walls had been mostly torn out, and the building almost destroyed. Everything had been looted, but the roof still remained and in one room up-stairs almost three feet of floor was left. By putting down loose boards they set up some beds, and here they began house keeping once more.

In 1892 a girls school building and dispensary were built. The latter became a part of the Sarah Parker Memorial Hospital, for which the money was given by Iowa friends in memory of an officer of their branch. Still later, after a furlough here, a home for the missionaries was erected.

The oversight of the erection of these buildings has added a tremendous burden to the labors of Dr. Bement during the past years. Building a hospital in Shaowu is a very different matter from a similar undertaking in America.

First of all the foundations must be very deep and strong. The soil is very unstable, so in some places it has been necessary to dig down fifteen feet. Late at night after her day's work Dr. Bement watched and directed the force of about forty men as they dug the trenches and laid the big stones. Most of the masons were unskilled, so it was

Dr. Bement in 1915.

necessary for the doctor herself to descend into the trenches seven feet deep, to see whether any stones were loose. These foundations were made of stones weighing fifty to a hundred pounds each with smaller ones in the center, and the testing required the expenditure of much strength.

It has been very difficult many times to secure these foundation stones. Many of them are picked up along the bed of the river and carried half a mile or more to the place of building. On account of disturbing the great dragon, or any spirits of the ancestors, many rocks which might otherwise have been easily procured were unobtainable.

After the foundation had been laid and allowed to settle through a rainy season, it was necessary to find the brick for the building itself. But there was no brick, as in this country, ready to be had for the buying. Finally two men were found, who wanted to make brick and as they were said to be responsible, the missionaries hired them to make 60,000. When 7,000 had been made extremely cold weather came on, and the undried bricks froze. About 2,000 only could be used. New difficulties were encountered in the burning. Dr. Bement with one man was obliged to test every brick which was accepted. If it rang it was supposed to be good; if not it was laid aside. Someone suggested at this time that the hospital be called "Every-brick-rung hospital."

At last the much anticipated hospital was finished, including a dispensary, house for the native hospital assistants, and one used as a kitchen, laundry and store-room. It was indeed a wonderful building, not only to the missionaries who had toiled so long and waited so anxiously for its completion, but to all the neighboring country. Hundreds came to see it, and many would sit down and look and listen to the work by the hour.

There was no need to wait for patients. Many cases of fever and dysentery, people with sores and bad eyes

were very common. There were almost always a few abscesses to open or slight operations to perform among the other work of the day. After the early morning visits in the hospital, and perhaps a short talk by the river, where sometimes wild pheasants flew across her path,—came the office hours of the morning.

Dr. Bement gives us the picture of such a day. "Almost ten o'clock the women begin to come. They have had time to do up their hair in the wonderful fantastic way in which they do it and then come by two's and three's and in groups and parties—of course each one has the most important thing that ever came to the hospital, she must tell it over and over to the doctor and have her friends explain it also lest it should not be understood.

"This woman has brought her day old baby 15 miles in a chair because of a deformity which she is rightly sure will cause its death if not rectified by this foreign doctor. This woman had appendicitis some time ago, and now has an opening into the abdomen as a result.

"Those who have come in chairs are too sick and miserable to think of combing their hair or anything else but to get relief if possible. This woman has come from a country village some distance away. She has had her mouth like that for two weeks because of a dislocated jaw, which causes great admiration as it slips into place, and the woman most cautiously, opens her mouth, to see if it will slip back again. This woman has brought her two little children—she has little feet and walked and carried one child and hired a man to carry the other two days journey because the little one had convulsions. And then the great host of people who have malaria and all sorts of bowel trouble, and tuberculosis, and ulcers and abscesses, and bad eyes, ears, and so on and so on till one wonders where it will end, and all the time the three Biblewomen are telling the Old, Old Story of Jesus and his love and of their sisters in America who have made it possible for them to get this help and learn of the Great Healer of

the Nations, and after they have gone we have time to go over the hospital and do what is needed and perhaps to make a number of calls to the city."

Among these busy days in the office and city Dr. Bement must find time also for journeys to less fortunate villages of the district. Some of the patients there have waited weeks or months for help. Think of it—only one or perhaps two opportunities in all the year to consult a doctor! The space around Dr. Bement in the court-yard or wherever she receives them is crowded with patients, many of them mothers bearing their sick children, and with rapid but sure judgment, she must work here hour after hour until these pitiful groups of humanity are all helped. Would it be any wonder if Dr. Bement were sometimes very tired and sorely in need of rest?

But there is slight opportunity for rest—either in Shaowu or the neighboring country. How can a doctor rest when someone below is asking that she come and care for a woman who is suffering or dying; how can a missionary close her door and rest when she knows little children are ill and need her? Surely Dr. Bement should be given the three thousand dollars for which she has asked that the much needed children's ward may be added to the hospital, and we should send her the assistant doctor for whom she has wished so long. Several graduates from the hospital have already gone to Peking to study in the Woman's Medical School there, and perhaps she may later have help from some of these. But another American doctor is needed also. Let us give and pray much for our brave—efficient—builder—missionary—doctor, Lucy Bement.

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